

Telecon
Secretary Laird
11/21/69 3:50p.m.

K was calling about the atrocity case; the President wants to make sure L got on top of that--got a game plan. K said it was going to be a terrible mess. L said he's got the ~~thing~~ on his desk--the General is going to request that we give him a trail. K said he didn't object to that. L said he thinks the guy is going to plead insanity, and L thinks he'll get off. L asked if K had the pictures. K said no. L asked if K would like to look at them. K said should I? L said K might as well not. They're pretty terrible. L said what can you do? L said it didn't happen in our watch and we're going to make that clear before the Fulbright committee. K said Haldeman heard that the Army is trying to impound the pictures--that can't be done. L said the pictures belong to the guy so we can't do anything with them. L said _____ only said he would appreciate not doing anything with them until after the trial because they would prejudice the trial. But L said they're already published in the Cleveland Plain Dealer. L said some of the press wants us to give them out, but we're not going to. K said no, we don't want you to. That's right. L said the Sargeant has already given them out. L said about a game plan, he's like to sweep the whole thing under the rug, but you can't do that. K said we just need some unified line. L said he's going to say that he discovered it in March; he was shocked; he ordered a full investigation. L said but under the orders in Vietnam, only someone who had lost his sanity could carry out such an act. L said let me send you what I sent to Fulbright. L said it would be released Monday or Tuesday. L said he thought about how to sweep it under the rug. K said we can't do that. L said these are lousy looking things. L said those boys had been suffering terribly; one of their boys had been killed just 24 hours before. L said you can understand ~~it~~ a little bit of this, but you shouldn't kill that many. L said there are so many kids just laying there; these pictures are authentic. L said he didn't know what to do; it bothers him, but he doesn't know what to do. K said he wondered if we could establish a press policy for DOD, and L should send the requests over to K. L said yes.

K said he thought the Okinawa things went okay. L said he may send a game plan. L said we've got all kinds of problems with this atrocity thing, but we've got to be careful that we don't take on everybody on the Vietnam war thing. L said he thinks we can sell a lot of young people and other people if they know what our policy is. L said we would be left holding the bag after about 12 months. L said we've got to be careful that we don't overdo these things. L said the major problem in the minds of Americans is Vietnam, but if we keep up this way we're going to affect

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what we're trying to do in Vietnam. L has written up some notes; maybe K should see them. K said he would love to see them. L said it's the long-term thing you have to look at. L said they'll be ready to jump on you. L said if you polarize people on this you can only get 22% of Americans. L said look at Goldwater on those speeches. L said we've made our point; we ought to let it ride a little bit. K said right, if you could let me see those notes, I basically agree with you.